



# *The Arizona State Veteran Home Chatter*

December 2011

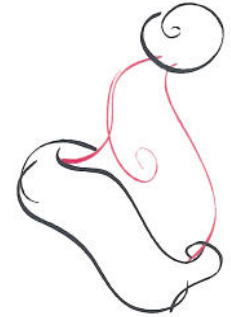
*Arizona State Veteran Home*  
*4141 North S. Herrera Way*  
*Phoenix, AZ 85012*  
*602-248-1550 • www.azdvs.gov*

## ***Administrator's Corner***

The Holiday Season is Upon Us!!!

Holiday Time..... Though it is still a bit strange for me to see lights wrapped around palm trees (you don't see that in upstate New York), I am thrilled to have completed my first year of employment at the Arizona State Veteran Home – Phoenix. I have to add the city "Phoenix" because shortly, our State's second State Veteran Home will be opening in Tucson. I can't think of a better gift for the Veterans who reside in the Tucson area.

This time of year, I remind myself to reflect on the gifts I have received over the past year. I am truly thankful for each.



Inside this issue:

- |   |                                  |   |
|---|----------------------------------|---|
| • I have been blessed with a caring staff. Their level of commitment was clearly measured in our State and Federal annual survey where we received 3 minor and isolated findings.   | <i>Veteran of the Quarter</i>    | 2 |
| • In July, our Veterans were the recipients of very generous donations of time and gifts from the Diamondbacks, Major League Baseball, Bank of America, and Rebuilding Together.  | <i>Volunteers Corner</i>         | 3 |
| • The continued generosity of the Veteran Service Organizations and Community Organizations who donate both financially and offer the gift of time. Those donations allow us to provide the "extras" to our Veterans and Members. | <i>Activities</i>                | 4 |
| • The many individuals and the Volunteers of the Arizona State Veteran Home who work to improve the quality of life for our Veterans.   | <i>VFW Volunteer of the Year</i> | 6 |
| • My new Director of Nursing, Lisa Thomas, R.N. I am sleeping so much better since her arrival.   | <i>VFW Employee of the Year</i>  | 6 |
| • An active Family Council Group that meets monthly at the home on the third Saturday at 10:00 am in the training center. Please join them!   |                                  |   |
| • Our Veterans who are clear in what they like about their lives at the Home and what they dislike. I hear it all!  |                                  |   |
| • And the staff who have chosen to make the Arizona State Veteran Home their career. Thank you.   |                                  |   |

Editor

Candy Covarrubiaz

Warmest Holiday Wishes to you and Yours!!!!!! Thank you for allowing me to be a small part of the team.

Colleen

## Veteran of the quarter

Edward O'Hara, or "Ed," as he is known by many, has a very peppy, gregarious personality. His laugh is full of unique fun, and it is a pleasure to visit with him on topics of both the present and past. Ed's hometown is located in Northeastern Pennsylvania, in a town called Scranton. It is a prosperous city now, as it was when Ed lived there in the 1940's. Since his junior year in High School, Ed has known he wanted to be a Navy man. "Back then everyone was joining, and all the heroes in Hollywood were Air Force and Marine." He enjoyed playing sports in high school and had friends in the area, many of whom served their country alongside one another, during World War II.

In 1943 Ed went into the Service, doing training in Bainbridge, MD for 6 weeks before being sent to the South Pacific. He would serve until November of 1946. "We were sent to the South Pacific in a Convoy to New Guinea (an island north of mainland Australia)."

Ed loves to talk about his unique experience serving in the Navy on PT boats. These boats both patrolled and carried weaponry. Each boat contained 4 torpedoes. Ed told me, "General McArthur was the best. His philosophy was to cut off supplies to the island rather than simply attack. The island was well fortified!" There were snakes and almost certain death to those who attacked. Ed says the experience was, "Hell- absolute Hell." When I asked Ed about the native people on the island, he told me they were Pygmies. "There were various tribes of Indians who were very sickly." He described them as having, "elephantitis and big sores on their bellies. They only lived maybe 22 years or so." He elaborated that they had no problem, "cooking up a neighbor for dinner."

Ed did not enjoy the sloppy mud very much, but the comradeship with other American soldiers helped make the experience bearable. The military had a base out in the South Pacific and the Navy worked closely with Marine, Army and Air Force men on "one big team." It didn't matter what religion or state the soldiers came from, "Americans were Americans." The goal: to cut off support to that island. Ed is thrilled to show you his book by William Breuer titled, "Devil Boats- the PT War Against Japan," that describes the work they did during those years and explains what strategies were involved.

Each man on the boat had an important job. Ed was a "radio man." He would "blink to the guys on the horizon," and send coded messages that were crucial for communication. Some other communication involved flags of varying colors; especially red and yellow flags. There were also flashing light and dotting techniques that Ed was able to master.





## Volunteers Corner

Here it is, the end of another successful year at the Arizona State Veteran Home and we thank our Volunteers for bringing smiles, hugs and joy to our Nation's Heroes. Caring Companions replaced the cold of loneliness with the warmth of friendship. Therapy Dog Teams were everywhere, offering soft furry friends to snuggle. The yearnings of souls were met through prayers and ministries of all spiritual paths. Music and singing was heard as one strolled through hallways. All Holidays, from Veterans Day to New Year's Eve, were met and celebrated with trips and activities that served to make the Veterans' Golden Years shine.

The scientific, medical world seemed to soften and the sights, sounds and smells of home made the Veterans and their families feel welcome and comfortable. This was successful because of the hours Volunteers spent at ASVH during the year. Speaking of Volunteers and their hours, here's an incredible fact: Our Volunteer Team increased to more than 130 men and women who contributed more than 1300 hours each month! Pat yourselves on the back because you are ALL part of that statistic. Many thanks to Staff for encouraging the Volunteers to help! Many thanks to the Veterans, the Spouses and their Families for welcoming the Volunteers! Many thanks to Volunteers for making it happen!

Volunteers of the Month for 2011 include:

May: Cathy Malpass – Thank you cards for donations, tally Vol. hours

June: Eileen Szychowski – Caring Companion, Special Events

July: Jack DeVries – Caring Companion, Special Events, Go-for

August: Chris Antoniou – Caring Companion, Special Events, Go-for

September: Chris Carlson and Bella – Therapy Dog Team

November: Lorraine Deily - Gift Shop, Special Events and Caring Companion

December: Louise "Weezie" Burrell – Front Desk, Special Events

The ASVH Volunteer of the Year for 2011 was presented by the Veterans of Foreign Wars to Sharon Taylor, the (Volunteer) Volunteer Coordinator.

Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and Blessed Solstice, Everyone!



## Activities and Events

## Veterans Day





# Halloween



# CHRISTMAS





## VFW Volunteer of the Year

For the Volunteer of the Year, we are proud to recognize Mrs. Sharon Taylor, who has been volunteering at the Arizona State Veteran Home since July of 2010

Sharon started in the Pet Therapy program, accompanied by her adorable dogs Shortcake and Duncan. After a few weeks, she decided she wanted to do more, and she began helping in the transport department, assisting veterans to medical appointments. Sharon quickly demonstrated a talent for organization, so she was asked to organize the volunteer program. Sharon enthusiastically agreed, and became the "Volunteer" Volunteer Coordinator.



Sharon has been busy as the Volunteer Coordinator. She has recruited and encouraged new volunteers, helped orient them, and reminded them of their yearly TB test requirements. Sharon worked very hard on Volunteer Appreciation Day, and planned a special commemorative slide show, as well as an ice cream social. She takes the time to listen to each volunteer, sending out birthday cards, get-well cards, and making them feel welcome. Thanks to her, the volunteer program has grown to over 100 volunteers, and the total volunteer hours have almost doubled!

Sharon says she's lucky to be at ASVH, because she is learning new skills for the future, but the truth is that we're lucky to have her! During the past year, she has volunteered over 1600 hours, sometimes volunteering over 40 hours each week. Sometimes, I have to tell her to go home, and spend time with her family.

It is our honor and privilege to recognize the Arizona State Veteran Home Volunteer of the Year, Mrs. Sharon Taylor.

## VFW Employee of the year

The Veterans and Employees of the Arizona State Veteran Home-Phoenix are fortunate to benefit from the talents of our Recreational Therapy Director, Kristin Fray. Kristin is a Board-Certified Music Therapist who graduated from Arizona State University in 2004. She received her Masters in Music from the University of Kentucky in 2006. Kristin came to the Arizona State Veteran Home as a unit therapist in March of 2009. Her skills and caring of the Veterans were quickly noticed and she was promoted to the position of Therapeutic Programs Department Director in July 2010. The grand-daughter of a WWII Veteran and a Korean War Veteran, she considers it an honor to be able to work at the Arizona State Veteran Home.

As a Music Therapist, Kristin believes that everyone deserves to experience music, regardless of ability level or diagnoses. To that end, she has focused on using Music Therapy in dementia care, using music as a tool to engage veterans who might otherwise be unaware or unable to participate.

With one veteran who was dying of kidney failure, Kristin encouraged him to write a song before he died. He chose to write a love song for his wife, which Kristin was able to sing for the two of them before he passed away. After he passed, Kristin recorded the song, so his wife would always have a copy of the words he had written for her.



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www.azdvs.gov



***“CARE YOU HAVE EARNED ”***

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**Administrator**

Colleen Rundell, M.S., LNHA  
602-248-1591 Office Phone

**Admission Coordinator**

Eric Coleman  
602-248-1550 Ext. 2746

**Housekeeping Manager**

Jose Santos  
602-248-1589

**Director of Nursing**

Lisa Thomas, RN  
602-248-1815 Office Phone

**Nursing Supervisor**

Cell Phone  
602-677-2201

**Engineering**

Randy Koelle  
602-248-1582

**Assistant Director of Nursing  
Daytime Nursing Supervisor**

Harold Brooks, RN  
602-677-2201

**Dietary Manager**

Bobby Thomas  
602-512-2925

**Nurses Station**

C-1 602-351-6886  
C-2 602-351-6887  
D-1 602-351-6884  
D-2 602-351-6885

**Social Services Supervisor**

Terry Green  
602-248-1572 Office Phone